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Simon Clarke –
An Inspired Collaboration

Sociology as
a Vocation

Alain Touraine,
Kalpana Kannabiran

Chile's Democratic
Transition

Manuel Antonio Garretón

Uruguay's Social
Democracy

Felipe Arocena,
Adriana Marrero
and Leandro Pereira,
Marcos Supervielle
and Mariela Quiñones,
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Hungary's
Rightwing Surge

György Csepeli,
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- > **South Africa's Women Miners**
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- > **European Sociological Association's Meeting**
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NEWSLETTER



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> Editorial

Reactions to Neoliberalism

We live in a neoliberal world where markets spread ever wider and ever deeper. Nothing escapes the market as it enters terrains that have for long been protected. From being a creative activity labor becomes the source of ever more uncertain survival; from being a medium of exchange money becomes a vehicle for making more money through loans and bets on loans, leading to wealthy creditors at one pole and impoverished debtors at the other; from sustaining life, nature (land, water, air) is subject to the destructive forces of capitalism, and turned into a high-priced commodity, encouraging violent dispossession; once a public good, knowledge is now sold to the highest bidder whether they be students in search of credentials or corporations in search of subsidized research. The commodification of each factor of production feeds the commodification of all. There seems to be no limit to the market.

Yet markets generate their counter-tendencies whether these be social movements and/or state regulation. This issue contains four articles on Uruguay's socialist response to the dilemmas of global marketization: redistributive policies leading to and caused by strong unions; social policies that have legalized abortion, same-sex marriage, and marijuana; the retention of high levels of public education. Capitalism, on the other hand, has invaded agriculture, transforming agrarian society into a vehicle of accumulation. In power for the second term, the broad socialist front that includes former members of the Tupamaros guerrilla movement, pursued a popular mandate for social democracy, a trajectory so different from Chile's conservative road. Despite the rise of pink or electoral socialism in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia, Uruguay's social democracy stands out as both humane and successful.

If Uruguay is an outlier in Latin America, then Hungary is an outlier within the former Soviet bloc – not in its socialism but in its authoritarian populism, an alternative response to the destructive powers of the market. The three articles from Hungary describe the rise of a mafia state headed by the self-aggrandizing Viktor Orbán, so different from Uruguay's President José Mujica who lives the humblest of lives. In Hungary political elites ever more removed and ever more ruthless close down democracy and public debate, discredit the idea of class as a communist distortion even as class becomes ever more salient, and cultivate a national chauvinism aimed against Jews and Roma people while scapegoating the European Union for Hungary's economic plight.

Two countries with very different economic and political histories respond to the same neoliberal stimulus with divergent political strategies. But can either social democracy or populist authoritarianism reverse the momentum of marketization that stalks the planet almost unhindered? Does the reversal of neoliberalism require a counter-movement not just on a national level but on a global scale, and what might that look like? Would such a global counter-movement expand or contract freedoms? Is it feasible or are we heading ineluctably for collective self-destruction?

> **Global Dialogue can be found in 14 languages at the [ISA website](#)**

> **Submissions should be sent to burawoy@berkeley.edu**



Simon Clarke is interviewed here by two of his students about the extraordinary collaboration he cultivated with young and gifted Russian sociologists, producing a cornucopia of case studies during and beyond the market transition.



Alain Touraine, internationally renowned sociologist, describes the origins of his path-breaking theories and his innovative and now widely used methodology for studying social movements. Here he reflects on his early optimism and his more recent pessimism.



Kalpana Kannabiran, enormously accomplished sociologist and activist from India, relates the potential symbiosis of sociology and critical legal studies in the pursuit of social justice.

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> An Inspired Collaboration with Russian Sociologists

An Interview with Simon Clarke

During the 1980s Simon Clarke, a British sociologist at Warwick University, was best known for his contributions to theory – in particular, his original interpretation of Marx, and his critique of the liberal foundations of modern sociology and economics. In 1990, Clarke took a fateful journey to the Soviet Union, inaugurating two decades of research through a rare international collaboration. He became the prime mover behind a new school of Russian sociology that examined a society in the throes of transformation. Along with his colleague Peter Fairbrother, he brought together a network of Russian researchers in the Institute of Comparative Labour Relations Research (ISITO). Here Clarke and his Russian colleagues produced a corpus of work that meticulously analyzed the impact of economic reform on workplaces and households, and the response of workers and their organizations. This research was unique in its scale, insight, and originality, offering an insistent challenge to the dominant neoliberal orthodoxy. The ethos of ISITO was equally noteworthy. If hierarchy and subordination were key attributes of Soviet organizations, in ISITO, Simon Clarke managed to foster a collaborative ethos, underpinned by trust, friendship, and a spirit of mutual learning. Here he is interviewed by two of his former students, Sarah Ashwin who teaches at the London School of Economics and Valery Yakubovich who teaches at ESSEC Business School, France.

Valery: *From the late 1980s many Western sociologists went to the Soviet Union to observe a “natural experiment” in social change. But few, if any, created a new research institution. How did you come up with this idea?*



Simon Clarke with admiring sociologists from Samara.

SC: Annie Phizacklea and I took a group of Warwick University students to Russia in March 1990. I was immediately excited by the sense of a myriad of new possibilities that seemed to be opening up. By chance we met Svetlana Natalushko, who had taken over running the “Advanced Sociology Courses,” which had been founded by Galina Mikhalyova at the Higher Komsomol School (that had been renamed the Institute of Youth), to provide courses for young sociologists from Russia’s regions. In the absence of democratic elections, public opinion surveys had become an important instrument for the alternative social organizations which had formed under perestroika (and for Party and trade union organizations trying to retain power), so many activists aspired to develop their sociological knowledge and came to Moscow to study sociology in a relatively progressive en-

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vironment. I was invited back to give a week of lectures in December and among the students were Vadim Borisov and Olga Rodina, who were to become a mainstay of ISITO. The following March Peter Fairbrother and I again took a party of students and met more young sociologists, including you Valery Yakubovich, Vladimir (“Volodya”) Ilyin, and Petr Bizyukov, and had some fascinating site visits and meetings with alternative labor movement activists.

At that time, as you say, many western sociologists were beginning research in the Soviet Union, but most were content to subcontract their fieldwork to Soviet research institutes, survey organizations, or graduate students, which could produce plenty of cheap quantitative data (qualitative research was regarded as unscientific in the Soviet Union) and reports recycling their old research. We were not interested in analyzing second-hand data of dubious reliability, but wanted to carry out our own research. The obvious barriers were time and language, but Vadim, Volodya, and Olga were able to serve as our interpreters and collaborators in interviews, and we already had a core of interested researchers who could conduct ethnographic case studies. We spent four trips over the following year traveling around Russia with Vadim and Volodya to carry out pilot studies, interview labor movement activists, and look for potential collaborators. We explained to those we met that we were interested in conducting collaborative ethnographic research, but that there was no funding. This was enough to sort out those who had a purely financial interest in collaborative research from those who positively wanted to participate in the project for its own sake. Eventually, we established research teams in Moscow, Syktyvkar, Samara, and Kemerovo, with such outstanding leaders as Vadim Borisov, Vladimir Ilyin, Irina Kozina, Petr Bizyukov, and Veronika Kabalina.

We later formed research teams in Perm, Yekaterinburg, St Petersburg, Ulyanovsk, and Ivanovo. The whole program was held together by the friendship and commitment of the teams and team leaders, without any institutional framework, but we had always insisted to our collaborators that the space that had been opened up for informal organization by the disintegration of the USSR and its institutions would not persist and that they needed to get an institutional foothold in their regions, while we needed an institutional identity for our collaboration. Eventually, after many bureaucratic pitfalls, we established the Institute for Comparative Labour Relations Research (ISITO) as a non-profit social organization, with the paraphernalia of bank accounts, management committee, director, bookkeeper, and subordination to the tax authorities. Nevertheless, in practice ISITO continued to operate as an informal network based on friendship, collaboration, and commitment to research.

Sarah: As you say, qualitative research was regarded as unscientific in the Soviet Union. So did ISITO team members have experience of ethnography, or did you need to train them?

Valery: As I remember, despite its “unscientific” reputation, qualitative research was enthusiastically received in Russia in the early 1990s. What insights do you think you’d have missed without a qualitative approach?

SC: When we first established our research program we discussed it with many sociologists in Moscow. They insisted that there were no sociologists in Russia’s regions, only “field researchers.” Sociology was divided between social philosophers and social researchers. The social philosophers, who considered themselves to be the only true sociologists, had made a seamless transition from Marxist-Leninist to Western social philosophy, but had no interest in evaluating the empirical validity of either. Social researchers insisted that, while qualitative methods (“soft” methods) might have some heuristic value, only quantitative methods (“hard” methods) were truly scientific. Nevertheless, the younger sociologists we met, especially those from Russia’s regions, showed real interest in qualitative methods. This was partly a matter of resources, because there was little money for quantitative research outside the Moscow Institutes, whereas anybody could do qualitative research, provided that they had time. But it was also because they were disillusioned with the Soviet fetishism and politicization of quantitative research. Nobody believed the quantitative data published by state agencies to support the government political line. Qualitative research, observing and talking to people, revealed levels of reality that had never been reported by Soviet publications so it was exciting for younger, critical sociologists.

When we started our first project we held a three-day seminar on qualitative methods in a *dom otdykha* (vacation home) of the Radio Ministry outside Moscow, where we slept in freezing log cabins. Our key message to our collaborators was that qualitative research had to be rigorous and systematic. Peter Fairbrother led a memorable discussion of the technical aspects of qualitative research – the importance of having adequate and sufficient recording instruments, of writing up field notes immediately after an interview or observation, the technical and ethical aspects of recording interviews and so on. Everybody was enthusiastic, quickly grasping the essential principles of qualitative research.

Most of our research was based on comparative case studies, particularly of industrial enterprises. Each research team was responsible for conducting a certain number of case studies according to an agreed schedule. We held initial seminars, involving all the researchers, at which we decided who would be interviewed, for example key senior managers, shop chiefs, foremen, and a sample of ordinary workers from one main and one auxiliary shop, and what forms of observation would be undertaken, for example sitting in the office of a shop chief or trade union president or shadowing a foreman. We then drew up interview guides for each informant category and prepared a template for the

report to be written up for each enterprise. In this way we ensured, as best we could, that all of the case studies were conducted on a comparable basis. Each case study report, with its associated interview transcripts and field notes, was circulated to all the research teams and discussed by them in their team meetings. Every three months we held meetings with the team leaders to review progress and every year we had a research seminar with all the participants to formulate and evaluate hypotheses against the case study reports. For the final seminar of each project everybody was expected to present an analytical paper drawing on all the case study reports and these became the basis of project publications in Russian and English.

I doubt that we would have got any insights at all without a qualitative approach. People individually knew what happened in Soviet and Russian institutions and organizations, but this knowledge was nowhere systematically collated and codified. Without qualitative research we have no idea what questions to ask in a survey and no idea of how to interpret the answers; quantitative research can only ever come at the final stage of a project, when we seek a basis on which to generalize conclusions drawn from qualitative studies. We were not opposed to quantitative methods, but we were suspicious of the available Russian quantitative data, especially as many of our collaborators had worked as interviewers and knew the tricks that interviewers pulled. We also found major inconsistencies in the data that we sought to use in our own research, including that from the most respected surveys.

Our dissatisfaction with existing data sources led us to seek funding for our own labor market survey in our four core regions in 1998, directed by you Valery Yakubovich, with rigorous sampling, monitoring of interviewers, and testing the consistency of our data.

Sarah: Together with ISITO, you were extraordinarily productive, publishing eighteen books and 55 refereed articles in English, as well as countless publications in Russian. Which of your findings excited you most?

SC: Initially we were looking to the new workers' movement to provide leadership during transition, and throughout our research we have sought to support the development of a democratic and effective trade union and labor movement in Russia. I think that most of our findings have been depressing rather than exciting. After the initial excitement following the collapse of the USSR, when anything seemed possible, we had to confront our naiveté as neoliberalism swept all before it and resistance to the "reforms" that destroyed people's lives and hopes was rarely more than symbolic, with no effective leadership from the traditional trade unions, while the "alternative" unions sank into a swamp of corruption. Of course there were individuals and small groups who resisted, but most were quickly undermined by repression and/or indifference.

Most of our research rigorously substantiated what we already suspected on the basis of past experience and observation, but there were some surprises. In one of our first projects we asked what motivated Russian workers. Sergei Alashev proposed his hypothesis that "Russian workers love to work" to much initial laughter, but the paper he produced (published in *Management and Industry in Russia: Formal and Informal Relations in the Period of Transition*, 1995) was a brilliant exposition of his argument.

From a scientific point of view I guess the most interesting finding has been the extent to which Soviet culture, mentality, and practices have been reproduced, for better or worse, in a whole range of institutions. In our research we saw this most particularly in trade unions, and industrial management and shop-floor culture, but the phenomenon can also be observed clearly in the reconstitution of traditional state structures.

Some of the most striking findings came out of the 1998 household survey, which gave us high-quality quantitative data on which to test various hypotheses. One of these, suggested by Lena Varshavskaya of Kemerovo, was that domestic agriculture was not a lifeline for the poor as many commentators claimed, because the costs of domestic agriculture in time and money far outweighed the returns in agricultural produce. Rather, in line with the continuity argument, it was a leisure activity of the better off that exemplified the Soviet work ethic, idealization of nature, and traditions of exchange.

Another key finding concerned the dominance of institutional over market determinants of wage differentiation, strongly supportive of the traditional, though largely forgotten, argument of industrial relations specialists against labor economists and, in a similar vein, of the inability of labor economics to explain the domestic division of paid and unpaid labor. For me, as a one-time economist, these are among our most satisfying findings because I think that the principal responsibility of the social sciences today is to challenge and undermine the scientific pretensions of neoclassical economics, to show it up as the vacuous and pernicious ideology that it is.

Valery: What is the situation of ISITO now?

SC: ISITO as an institution is going through the process of liquidation, primarily because the administrative and financial procedures demanded by the Russian state are so costly in time and money, but the informal connections remain. In some ways, ISITO is a victim of its own success. Its members became highly sought-after candidates for top research and teaching positions at Russian universities. The majority have secured academic positions within which they can continue their work. We will have the final ISITO seminar in March (2014), probably in Egypt, to which all our friends and comrades will be invited. ISITO publications can be found at www.warwick.ac.uk/russia. ■

> Moving Beyond Sociology

by **Alain Touraine**, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France and former Vice-President of the ISA, 1974-78

For four decades **Alain Touraine** has been a towering figure in the world of sociology. Starting out as an industrial sociologist he made his name as a theorist of social movements, leading him to conceive of the collective self-creation of society, which, in turn, inspired a new methodology of sociological intervention. He is a sociologist with rare global reach, always seeking out social movements for the expansion of freedom and dignity in different corners of the world. A long stream of now canonical works have come from his pen, including *The May Movement of Utopian Communism* (1968), *The Postindustrial Society* (1969), *The Production of Society* (1973), *The Voice and the Eye* (1978), *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement: Poland 1980-1981* (1983) (with François Dubet, Michel Wieviorka and Jan Strzelecki), *The Return of the Actor* (1984), and, most recently, *The End of Societies*. Touraine set up his own Center for Sociological Analysis and Intervention in the EHESS in Paris where he has trained scores of students from all over the world.



Alain Touraine.

My first and most lasting orientation to sociology came from my opposition to a school system which was more interested in defending its own norms than in nurturing the different needs of young people. I was a strange case of an unhappy and not very successful school boy who, in the end, excelled in one of the most prestigious “competitive exams” in his country, thereby becoming a student at the renowned École Normale Supérieure. After two years I left this wonderful place, spent one year partly traveling in Central Europe and partly working as a semi-skilled coal miner.

Georges Friedmann, the main figure behind the newly born European industrial sociology invited me to join a group of people who were studying occupational change

introduced into various industries by new technologies. He put me in charge of the study of the major French automobile company, the nationalized Renault Company. I devoted one and a half years to studying the details of jobs and forms of industrial organization in the various plants of this huge corporation. I published the results of this intensive project in 1955 as my first book. Meanwhile I won another “concours” (competition) to become a professor of history but, thanks to Friedmann, I was also selected as a full-time researcher in sociology where I would be completely free to organize my own research group. Friedmann told me very gently: if you succeed in this difficult “concours,” I will obtain a job of researcher for you and if you fail, I will do the same, because we need a new generation of researchers.

After a few years at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) I spent a year in the US – Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago – and another year in Chile where I created a center for industrial sociology and, more importantly, married a young Chilean biologist. It was then, when I was 34 years old, that I was elected full professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales – it had a different name at that time – where I spent the rest of my professional life except for several years in Latin America and various semesters spent at UCLA, Berkeley, and the New School in New York City.

In 1966 my abiding hostility toward the official academic system prompted me to join the new university of Nanterre which had been founded near Paris. I did not realize I was going to spend a few years at the center of the student

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movement in Europe which was rapidly transforming itself into a major cultural and political drama. Of the people who wrote books about it I think mine was the most deeply favorable since I saw it as the most important example, after the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964, of the new “cultural” rather than “social” movements. At the same time I emphasized the contradictions between this cultural movement and the old Marxist, and especially Trotskyist and Maoist ideologies which interpreted it in political terms. It was, I said, like pouring young wine into old bottles. So that brought me into conflict both with conservative professors and with the “leftist” political groups. But I was in deep agreement with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, anarchist and anti-communist, who was most influential at Nanterre where I was teaching.

I became rapidly convinced that most forms of collective behavior cannot be defined in terms of agreement with or divergence from laws, customs, and dominant values. This led me to develop two different initiatives. The first consisted in studying collective behavior through participation – in several cases I spent one full year with members of a social or political movement without using questionnaires but instead organizing debates between activists and their supporters as well as their enemies. It was in this way that I studied the student movement ten years after Nanterre, the Anti-Nuclear movement, a regionally based nationalist movement, unionized workers in different sectors of the economy, and – which became our greatest joy – the Polish Solidarność movement of 1980-81, and unionized workers in the Chilean coal mines and steel industry. More recently, together with a friend, I devoted a rather long time to the study of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas in the southeast of Mexico. In each case I tried to make movement participants conscious of the highest possible meaning of their conflicts.

This approach was clearly opposed to functionalist studies which considered actors and systems as two sides of the same coin. On the contrary – and this was my second, theoretical initiative – I became more and more convinced that the logic of social system and the logic of social actors, or at least the logic of those whose action reached the highest level of innovative and critical intervention, were directly opposed to each other. Systems look for their own integration and for adjustments to external or internal change, while actors want to increase their own freedom of action, their autonomy, their dignity, and their responsibility. It certainly often happens that the two logics converge toward the same kind of choices. But in societies in which internal systems of control are relatively weak and whose environment is constantly changing the two logics often enter into contradiction, despite the constant crea-

tion of new forms of manipulating public opinion. Globalization, by itself, increases the complexity and, by way of consequence, the presence of multiple conflicts within any sector of social life.

We all know that sociology was created in industrial societies, that is in societies with a huge capacity to transform their environment and themselves through the creation of new forms of production, organization, distribution, and consumption, that is by using social and economic resources and methods. Now, for the first time societies saw themselves as able to create and transform themselves. That was magnificently expressed by Durkheim’s founding principal: to explain social facts by social facts.

A second category of transformations, equally important, refers to rationalization and marketization that now dominate not only the production of goods; they also impose their logic on communications and representations, so that social and economic actors are eliminated from those new and immense fields. Actors become less powerful to the extent that they only possess instrumental rationality.

Today, our main task is to understand social situations and social actors that are deeply different from those of industrial societies. On the one hand there is the rise of authoritarian regimes and, on the other hand, in the West industrial capitalism has been replaced first in 1929 and then again in 2007-8 by a financial capitalism which has no economic function but only to make profit by any means possible. Actors can only resist powerful speculative capital and the pursuit of pure profit by defending ethical universal values. While the notion of human rights did not capture the imagination during the long post-war period, we see now that Human Rights and Democracy are the only values which appear to be able to mobilize enough social and political forces to oppose anti-democratic authoritarian regimes and speculative capitalism.

We are as far as possible from the identification – typical of industrial society – of actors with systems. The 21st century began in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square, and then later came the Arab Spring. The democratic spirit receives everywhere the support of new forces. Recently I have tried to analyze this general change of approach in a rather long book called *The End of Societies*, which refers to the end of “societies” that thought and acted on themselves. Sociologists themselves must recognize that the concept of society no longer corresponds to the world in which we live. So while sociology itself could very well be renamed “political ethics,” the social sciences will not disappear. ■

> A Conversation between Law and Sociology

by **Kalpana Kannabiran**, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad, India, member of the ISA Program Committee for the Yokohama World Congress, 2014 and member of ISA Research Committee on Women and Society (RC32)

Kalpana Kannabiran is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Council for Social Development, Hyderabad, an autonomous research institute supported by the Indian Council for Social Science Research. She was awarded the VKRV Rao Prize for Social Science Research in the field of Social Aspects of Law in 2003. She was part of the founding faculty of NALSAR University of Law where she taught sociology and law for a decade, 1999-2009, and is co-founder of Asmita Resource Centre for Women, set up in 1991. Her work has focused on understanding the social foundations of non-discrimination, violence against women, and questions of constitutionalism and social justice in India. Her most recent book is *Tools of Justice: Non-Discrimination and the Indian Constitution* (Routledge, New Delhi, 2012). In 2012 Kalpana Kannabiran received the Amartya Sen Award for Distinguished Social Scientists for her work in the discipline of law.

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| Kalpana Kannabiran.

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I started to study sociology at the undergraduate level in Hyderabad in the late 1970s but it was not an informed choice. The combination of subjects – economics, sociology, and geography – seemed interesting in a vague kind of way, and different from literature, psychology, and philosophy which I was sure I did not want to study. In a sense it was a default choice. I went to a public college in a state university – Nizam College in Osmania University – and from there to the University of Hyderabad for a Masters and MPhil and finally to Jawaharlal Nehru University for a PhD in sociology. Undergraduate teaching in my time was unimaginably unimaginative, as it tends to be in state universities, but so was the Masters program.

Fortunately, by my second year of BA, I had got closely involved with a feminist group, Stree Shakti Sanghatana, and was participating in campaigns against domestic violence and rape. I was also beginning to learn about the movements for civil liberties that campaigned against state impunity in the post-Emergency era, i.e. between 1977 and 1985. I was also fortunate to have a ringside view of the movement for civil liberties because my father was a lawyer and President of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee and later became National President of the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties and my mother, a feminist writer and poet, was a vocal critic of the civil liberties movement, even while providing vital support to survivors and political dissidents who kept coming to our home. She was also part of Stree Shakti Sanghatana and a co-author of *We Were Making History: Life Stories of Women in the Telangana People's Struggle*.

This experience of directly witnessing the effects of state violence and the resistance to it beamed back on my understanding of sociology as holding the possibility of understanding society differently. And from that moment when I began to look

at sociology seriously, it was always tied to an understanding of the law and a commitment to radical politics. Not sociology of law but sociology and law as full disciplines that must speak to each other, in ways that enable a more nuanced understanding of justice. In an ironic twist, this connection was reinforced for me by the “accidental” deaths of my MPhil supervisor (then just about thirty) and her husband (also a teacher in the same department) in a fire at home that was witnessed by their two-year old child. I was her first and her last research student and a friend. The fact of domestic discord was well-known as was the extreme distress my supervisor was going through. There was nothing in all those classes on the sociology of the family that prepared me to even understand this. Coping was possible only because of my engagements with struggles outside the university, although my teachers were always vexed by my “activism.”

My involvement in the politics of organizing and my experience of law as tied to courtroom deliberations and strategies of interpretation, led me very early on to looking at case law, at the constitution and constituent assembly debates and at legislative debates. But I was also interested in exploring the possibilities of a popular and transformative constitutionalism: How do social and political movements represent the constitution in courts and outside? How are movements organized around constitutionalism? What legislative trajectories have movements opened up and how do these shape movements in a dialectical turn? The *Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act* of 2006 is an instance. The two-way relation wherein movements force the upholding of the constitution against a negligent state and the reliance of the state on movements for wisdom regarding legislation and accountable government throw up very interesting possibilities for re-

search such as the recent efforts that came to a head after December 2012 around a new law on sexual assault. Putting it differently, if we were to place justice at the center of sociological endeavor, the study of law creates enabling conditions for the sociological project.

I was not of course satisfied with looking at the law as a sociologist, because as a co-founder of a feminist collective, Asmita, in 1991, I was a pro bono counselor for women survivors of domestic violence and rape. Even a doctorate in sociology and an understanding of law did not help me get answers from lawyers representing cases. To dismantle the disability that professional gate-keeping imposes, I studied law and obtained formal degrees – a Bachelors and then a Masters in Jurisprudence. I refused to practice law but I could now enter courts to explore a different [constitutional] common sense with lawyers, judges, litigants, law students – one that broadened the understanding of fundamental rights beyond the rigidities and reductionism of constitutional law as it was practiced. Instead, I focused on reducing the suffering of and harm to people and communities that were particularly vulnerable.

On the other side, I was struck by how little sociologists understood law, although a range of sociological concerns are quite closely tied to realms of formal and customary law. Despite early western anthropology and sociology closely examining the relation of law and society and their transitions – Malinowski, Durkheim and Weber being the most obvious examples – sociology in India remained a gated community at many levels right through my education and my early forays into research and writing. A large part of the practice of sociology in India, for instance, has focused on “caste” – and much of this work has reproduced ideologies and structures of domination by situating theory within the experience of the dominant and deriv-

ing its logic from that standpoint. It has taken a long time to turn that around, and finally today we see the emergence of a different argument in classrooms and journals.

My own work departed from these conventions. Thus, one part focused on the historical emergence of criminal jurisprudence and how its development during the colonial period led to contemporary debates around sexual assault, sex work, the death penalty, and the criminalization of homosexuality and of transgender persons. A sociology calibrated with law enables an exploration of the politics of legislation, courtrooms, and interpretive strategies; it advances a keen understanding of the finely tuned mechanisms through which ideologies of domination percolate through procedural law into jurisprudence, defeating fundamental rights even while seeming to uphold them; and, of course, it examines the relationship between social location and access to justice.

A second and related thread has been my interest in investigating violence. While exploring the fields of gender, caste, disability, and minori-

ties (sexual and religious), my work has revolved around understanding the relationship between discrimination, loss of liberty, and violence. I have been particularly interested in theoretical strategies that might give rise to a shift in constitutional interpretation by courts, looking for instance at the different forms that the loss of liberty takes for different groups that suffer discrimination – untouchability (caste), sexual control (women), forced displacement (tribes), genocidal violence and ghettoization (religious minorities), and the refusal to impose barrier-free access as a norm (persons with disabilities). How does the idea of social transformation simultaneously accommodate the frames of revolutionary violence, Gandhian non-violence, and Ambedkarite resistance to caste? As an architect of the constitution and an anti-caste philosopher, Ambedkar is an influential figure who has been marginalized by the mainstream academy. How might we resurrect an intellectual history that will fold in to constitutional concerns?

The question of justice – framed by sociology and law as interlocked dis-

ciplines – throws up two ideas that are particularly relevant: the first is Ambedkar's idea that *constitutional morality* must replace public morality – a concept that lay buried for six decades till it was resurrected by the Delhi High Court in 2009 in its upholding of the rights of sexual minorities in the *Naz Foundation* case. Ambedkar only sketched it. What are its contours and how might this idea be developed to advance the place of justice within social sciences? This appeal to Ambedkar's idea itself underscores the importance of making impossible or unimaginable connections in our exploration of justice. The second focus that I find fascinating is the uses of the idea of insurgency – disobedience, criticality, and reflexivity – in fleshing out the field of constitutional morality and of justice more generally. This is the vision that drives movements for social transformation, and provides a framework for radical struggle on different fronts. It contains the potential for subaltern interpretations of constitutional morality by communities facing historical injustice and their advocates – interpretations that are subversive by definition. ■

> Forty Years after the Chilean Coup

An Interview with Manuel Antonio Garretón

Part II: The Challenges of the Democratic Transition



Manuel Antonio Garretón presenting the Manifesto for a New Constitution to the public, June 2013.

The interview with Manuel Antonio Garretón continues with a focus on the legacy of the dictatorship for democratic politics. Apart from his manifold academic activities Professor Garretón has led an intense political life, beginning with his election to President of the Student Union at the Catholic University in 1964. During the dictatorship he wrote and taught beyond the academy, training new generations who otherwise had little access to pluralistic education and information. He was actively involved in rebuilding the socialist democratic project, becoming a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party. After the dictatorship he participated in public debates about the transition to democracy, was advisor to the first Minister of Education, Coordinator of the Commission for Culture and member of the Commission for Higher Education. In recent years he

has been engaged in the promotion of a new constitution. His political life has always been informed by the intellectual perspectives of a social scientist.

MB: *In the previous part of the interview (GD3.5), you were talking about the failures of Salvador Allende and the Unidad Popular, especially the theoretical failures that contributed to their downfall. Let us now turn to the fall of the dictatorship. How could this happen? How did this happen?*

MAG: Let us start with a clarification: the failures or problems of Unidad Popular did not cause the downfall but the conspiracy of the civilian right and the intervention of the military, all this with the support of the US. In 1980 the dictatorship introduced a completely new constitution that

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generated two political orders; one from '80 to '88 and the other after '88. The first was the crystallization of the dictatorship, but with a constitution. The second was intended to be a strictly authoritarian civilian regime with military veto, what is called restricted democracy, protected democracy – whatever you want. But in order to go from one to another, and to keep the same leader in power – that is Pinochet – you needed to have some mechanism.

MB: This is where the plebiscite comes in, right?

MAG: Yes, they chose the mechanism of a plebiscite, but this created a problem. The opposition had developed considerable organizational capacity, first, in resisting and keeping organizations and people involved, and, second, in connecting different sectors of the opposition to one another and to social sectors in a rapidly changing context of structural transformation, of weakening unions, and so forth. The economic crisis of 1982-83 started a cycle of mobilization which had the effect of gathering people together, overcoming their fear and forging a political alliance, but without any idea as to how to get rid of the dictatorship. At the same time the communists, who were not part of the socialist opposition, wanted to get rid of the dictatorship through insurrection. Their attempt to assassinate Pinochet failed. Until the dictatorship called for the plebiscite to keep Pinochet in power, the opposition had no clear strategy. Although it was a very difficult decision, the opposition decided to contest the plebiscite. As one of the rightist civilian supporters of the dictatorship recognized, the plebiscite was the regime's big mistake as it played into the hands of the opposition. The only thing they knew how to do was to win elections!

Despite all the tricks and power resources of the regime, the opposition prevailed. So the mechanism the dictatorship chose to perpetuate itself proved to be its undoing. As regards the opposition, as long as it was a matter of getting out the "no" vote, it didn't matter that they had no program for the future.

MB: This is a strange way for a dictatorship to end, to commit suicide. What were the consequences of the plebiscite road to democracy?

MAG: One of the consequences was to get rid of the dictatorship but not its institutional framework or its economic model. That is very important. It is the only country in the world that after a long dictatorship, with a constitution created by the dictatorship, has not created its own constitution. It's the only case in Latin America of a transition to democracy in which there was no Constituent Assembly.

But this was not inevitable. After winning the plebiscite and then the elections, the ruling coalition, the Concertación, could have gone further toward changing the political system without fear of authoritarian regression.

MB: And from such a change in the political system it could have moved ahead with change in the neoliberal economic model?

MAG: You cannot change the economic model without first changing the political one. For example, you cannot even create an enterprise of the state under the present constitution. Remember that this is the purest neoliberalism – purer than Thatcher – because it was accomplished under the dictatorship. Now, after 20 years you have what I call the success trap of the Concertación that has won 19 elections, has moved the country from \$5,000 per capita to \$15,000 per capita, and, as another mark of progress, today 70% of university students have fathers who didn't have higher education. This amounts to an enormous transformation.

So the Concertación says, listen, we haven't done badly. It has been a great success. So why should we make any fundamental changes? Why should we change the constitution? We have democratized Chile and that was, indeed, a very important transformation. Moreover, they claim to have corrected neoliberalism. But in correcting it they have consolidated it, re-established its legitimacy. In other words, they failed to break the ties of this transformed society to Pinochet, to the dictatorship's socio-economic model and its non-democratic regime. The government may be democratic, politics may be democratic, but the regime is not democratic.

MB: What do you mean by that? What does it mean to have a democratic politics under an undemocratic regime? Sounds like a Leninist formula!

MAG: I mean, first, the constitution has never been democratically approved. So it is not legitimate in its origins. But second, the constitution established a political system where the minority which supported the dictatorship had equal electoral power to the majority that was against it. The electoral system makes it very difficult for a constituency to elect two candidates from the same party, even if the party wins the majority of the votes. And so the members of Congress are always evenly divided between two blocs, but to change the constitution you need a 75% majority. So it's impossible. What, after all, is the constitution for? It's for maintaining the economic model. It has one line about the right to life, and three pages about property rights.

MB: So what's so bad about the socioeconomic order? All these indicators point to it being a success.

MAG: I think that it is a complete failure. Nothing that is good is due to the economic model. It's due to the price of copper, to the policies of the Concertación attacking poverty. Solving the economic crisis is not in the model but in the counter-cyclical policies of the government.

MB: So the model is not so bad, it's without effect?

MAG: No, no. In the 70s Chile had the second most equal income distribution in Latin America. In 2000 it had the second most unequal income distribution after Brazil (with Uruguay always the most egalitarian). The income distribution in Sweden, before taxes, is more unequal than in Chile, but after taxes, Chile's income distribution is one of the worst in the world whereas Sweden's is one of the best. Second, there is no other educational system more segregated than the Chilean one, whether by neighborhood, class, income, or any other measure. In 1970, to be sure, there were fewer students studying, but then 75% were in the public system, today the figure is less than 35%. So you don't have a society, you have a market with some correction by the state. There's an important break between politics and society. If the Chinese and the copper disappear, the country will disappear. The model is based on exports, on commodities, and on people's debt. It has the worst labor relations laws in the world. You have 8% of the work force under collective bargaining. It is the only country without a policy toward indigenous people, the Mapuche. And it's a country that loves anti-depressant medication.

MB: But weren't you saying earlier that poverty has been eradicated?

MAG: If the standard measurement is used, poverty has fallen from 50% under the dictatorship to around 15%. But, you know, people who are above the poverty line today can be below the poverty line tomorrow. There's no public system of social protection.

MB: OK. You've made your case. Now we must turn to the student movement. To what extent does it reflect these inequalities? And to what extent do students have a political project of their own?

MAG: There are different interpretations of the student movement. There are those who say it is a typical middle-class movement. Students are discontent because they have got a lot and all they want is more. Discontent is one crucial dimension of every social movement, but it doesn't explain anything. If we are to talk about discontent, then it is the parents who are most unhappy because they have to go into debt to pay their children's student fees.

The most significant demand of the students has been for public education which includes three elements. First, the system of public education must be majoritarian and hegemonic. You can have a place for private education but it must be regulated. Second, the law must forbid for-profit schools, and prohibit the present system in which the state subsidizes the private profit of entrepreneurs in the school system and even in higher education. The third demand is for free public higher education and without subsidizing private higher education.

But you cannot make education free for everybody without a deep tax reform. If the children of the bourgeoisie receive free university education, like everyone else, that can only be because they are paying for it in heavy taxes. This means changing the economic model, which in turn requires changing the political system.

MB: So you're saying this is a revolutionary demand?

MAG: I call it a foundational demand, different from demands for better conditions. It seems to me that the student movement in Chile plays the same role, without having access to government or parties, as do the movements in Venezuela and in Bolivia, namely to break the relation between state and society inherited from dictatorships. And so in that sense it is "revolutionary," but it is not revolutionary in the sense of method. The other foundational aspect of the student movement is that, in my opinion, it is the first social movement in contemporary Chilean history that is not based on that historical imbrication with the political system that I mentioned above.

MB: So the privatized education is based on an economic model that cannot be changed without change of the constitution and the associated political system, and such a change, in turn, requires rebuilding the relation between politics and society. But, Manuel Antonio, who can possibly undertake this break – the one that already occurred in Brazil, Venezuela, and Bolivia – that will take us from a post-Pinochet market society to a more democratic one?

MAG: In Chile all historical projects were made through the connection of parties and movements: "industrialization" by the popular front (communists, socialists, and radicals), "agrarian reform" by Christian Democracy (church and peasant movements), "socialism" by the Unidad Popular (socialists, communists, and other parties). The fight against the dictatorship was made by the Concertación and the Communist Party but today that alliance is not enough to bring democracy, which requires reestablishing the link with movements. There have been moments when this seemed possible but they failed. A new possibility is now opened up with the recent presidential election. Michelle Bachelet was elected with a large majority and the first point on her program is a new Constitution. The combination of her promise with social mobilization could unleash a democratic, participatory, and institutional constituent process that could begin with a plebiscite. A new democratic constitution and a Constituent Assembly would provide new connections between politics and society, creating new parties and so on.

MB: Manuel Antonio, that was amazing – you covered the whole 40 years since the coup! That was quite an education for me as it will be for our readers. Thank you so much. ■

> Uruguay at the Vanguard of Latin America

by **Felipe Arocena**, University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay



A demonstration to legalize marijuana outside the Legislative Palace in Montevideo.

Uruguay, a small country of three million people, surprised the world with two laws it passed in 2013: one allowing marriage between people of the same sex and the other legalizing marijuana. If we add a third law passed in 2012 decriminalizing abortion, it would not be inaccurate to say that the country is now at the vanguard of the West.

According to the first article of the Uruguayan *Law of Equal Marriage*, “civil marriage is a permanent union, by law, of two persons of the opposite or the same sex.” In August 2013, under this new law, we saw the first

marriage between two men, followed by others between men as well as between women. In addition to Uruguay, there are two other South American countries with similar legislation: neighboring countries, Brazil and Argentina. Beyond that, only twelve other states in the world officially accept gay marriage: Sweden, Norway, France, Spain, Iceland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Denmark, Portugal, Canada, and South Africa (the vast majority of these being located in Western Europe). In Mexico, the United States of America, and the UK, this right exists only in some territories. If, following José Guilherme Merquior’s classification, we accept that Latin

America is the “other West,” it seems that to date gay marriage is almost exclusively Western, surely due to this region’s more pronounced secularization, its process of modernization, and the expansion of rights.

The proposed *Law on the Regulation of Marijuana* was approved in December 2013. According to this law, “the state will assume responsibility for the control and regulation of the activities of import, export, planting, cultivation, harvesting, production, acquisition, storage, marketing, and distribution of cannabis and its derivatives.” Marijuana growers clubs and household cultivation of up to

six plants per household will also be legal. No other country in the world has given the state public control over the production, distribution, and sale of marijuana. The expected effects are twofold. First, to distance marijuana consumers from drug trafficking – and from the victimization and violence with which it is associated. Second, it inaugurates an unprecedented strategy of combating drug trafficking itself. Uruguayan President José Mujica argues that if decades of repression have not ameliorated this situation, the time has come to try new solutions. If the Uruguayan “laboratory” shows positive results, other countries in the Organization of American States (OAS) – which are already looking at alternatives – are more likely to think seriously about adopting a similar approach.

In 2012 Uruguay also passed the *Law on the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy*, whose second article states, “voluntary termination of pregnancy will not be penalized [...] during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy.” In this area, Uruguay is also one of the few places in Latin America to recognize women’s right to abortion (along with Cuba, Guyana, Puerto Rico, and Mexico City). A woman’s desire alone provides sufficient basis for all the health institutions in the country to provide this service. Parliament had already approved this law five years ago, but former president Tabaré Vázquez, a medical oncologist by profession, vetoed it. Among the arguments in the law’s favor, two are central. First, women’s right to decide about their pregnancies, and second, doing away with the network of underground clinics that provided abortions

and risked the lives of low-income women, who could not pay for higher quality procedures.

These three laws have been passed because the ruling Frente Amplio (Broad Front) party has an absolute, official majority in the current Parliament. This governing party, actually a coalition of parties and groups ranging from center to left, was created in 1971 and first came to power in 2005, winning re-election in 2010. Meanwhile, support for these laws from opposition parties varies. While equal marriage had widespread support from lawmakers, the other two laws have been much more controversial, and almost half of the legislators opposed them. Such differences reflect similar patterns in the population at large.

These laws clearly reflect the country’s leftist government that has been in power for the last eight years with a legislative majority that allows it to pass such initiatives in Congress. But this would only be a superficial explanation. On a more thick, sociological level, what deeper forces of Uruguayan society are finding expression in these laws? How can we understand them, in a country that often defines itself as culturally conservative – and has one of the oldest populations on the continent?

There are at least four relevant factors. First, Uruguayan society is one of the most secular on the continent and probably in the world. As historian Carlos Real de Azúa wrote, Uruguay is the dimmest star in the Latin American Catholic sky. Second, the country already had a period in

the early twentieth century in which it adopted legislation considered avant-garde at the time, eliminating the death penalty (1907), accepting divorce initiated by women (1913), mandating an eight-hour work day (1915), and approving women’s suffrage (1927). The country advanced so much in the early decades of the last century that many were alarmed that it was becoming socialist. Third, even though the population is comparatively old, a large proportion came of age during the cultural, sexual, and political revolution of the 1960s. Fourth, the country is going through one of its most positive periods in many decades: its political democracy is complete (according to all the international indicators of contemporary democracies), the economy has grown at an average of around 5% per year in the last ten years, and society has become more egalitarian and less poor as a result of strong social policies that redistribute wealth. Uruguay is living through a period only comparable to the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was considered to have one of the best conditions of well-being on the planet.

It is likely that in the near future, many Western countries will pass measures very similar to those described here, and therefore it is not inaccurate to say that Uruguay is paving the way for a more general expansion of rights. At the same time, such laws may face severe obstacles as in so many countries, with their different cultural traditions, they would be viewed as an abomination. ■

> How Public is Uruguay's Public Education?

by **Adriana Marrero**, University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay, and member of ISA Research Committees on Sociology of Education (RC04), Sociological Theory (RC16) and Women and Society (RC32), and **Leandro Pereira**, University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay



Uruguay's parliament surrounded by protesting teachers.

There is a country, Uruguay, where between 80 and 90% of students of all ages attend public education. Yes, public. Private education represents no more than about 15% – a rate that has varied little historically. Public education is totally free, from preschool to university, including at the master's and doctoral levels. In addition to being free, university education is open-access, without exclusionary exams or quotas, so any high-school graduate may enroll. Furthermore, despite Latin American religiosity, Uruguayan public education has been secular since 1917 – and even in the nineteenth century, religious education was an option parents could refuse. In addition, in Uruguay, women have surpassed men in educational achievement since the beginning of the twentieth century; today, they have higher average levels of education than men. Women also represent almost three quarters of university and tertiary enrollment and an even higher percentage of graduates. This educational “paradise” was the first country in the world to adopt the MIT program “One laptop per child,” through which every student and teacher in every school –

currently through secondary education – receives a laptop computer with Internet access from the state. In honor of the national flower (the *ceibo*) the “CEIBAL Plan”¹ enables even the poorest to take the laptops home, where they can use them to learn, share, and play.

We might suppose that a system with these characteristics – public, free, and open, in a country with low population growth (0.19% per year) and where only 22% of the population is under 15 years old, in an area with a temperate climate and without geographical or cultural barriers – would be able to provide inclusive education and equitable educational results. But it does not.

According to the 2012 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) Report for Uruguay, “Uruguay continues to show a very pronounced inequality in sociocultural development. While 89% of students who attend educational institutions in ‘very unfavorable’ sociocultural contexts rank below Level 2, only 13% of students in the ‘most favorable’ contexts fall below this rank. The gap between the

two extremes is as wide as 170 on the Mathematics exam, making Uruguay a country of high educational inequality. This result has been a constant throughout the four cycles of PISA exams in which the country has participated.”

To put it simply, the most advantaged children, on average, score higher than the averages in Norway (489) or the United States (481), while the poorest score much lower than those of Qatar (376), Indonesia (375) or Peru (368). What’s more, of the students scoring the highest, 75% attend private schools.

If the results of the PISA exam are not convincing to the reader – indeed, there may be justified objections to the international comparisons, even if there are fewer against the internal comparisons the instrument allows – we can also draw on information generated internally within the country. In Uruguay, at higher levels of education, the poorest students are progressively stripped away – primarily due to high rates of school dropout and grade repetition. According to official data from the National Statistics Institute’s Household Survey (2012), 95.3% of children aged 6-11 attend primary school, 73.8% of those aged 12-14 attend secondary school, and only 51.4% of those aged 15-17 attend high school. Finally, only 23.7% of young people aged 18 to 24 attend university. Inequality between quintiles based on household income points in the same direction: at age 3, in the highest quintile, nine of every ten children attend school, while in the lowest quintile the rate is only one out of two. By age 22, 57% of young people in the highest quintile attend university, compared to only 9% in the lowest.

So, what is wrong here? How is it possible that an educational system based on principles that sought to ensure inclusion and equality could have such unequal and exclusive results?

We believe the problem can be located in the meaning of “public.” The education that Uruguay calls “public” really has very little connection to the notion of “public” as it is understood in democratic and pluralistic societies. All formal education, from preschool to university, is managed by two autonomous entities: the National Administration of Public Education (ANEP) and the University of the Republic – both of which are separated from the sphere of formal politics. Although there is a Ministry of Education included in the Executive Branch, it has practically no say over educational affairs. Even though the Constitution states that “Sovereignty resides in the Nation,” as expressed by ballots in obligatory elections every five years, the will of the Uruguayan people regarding education policy cannot find expression, either through the bicameral legislature or through the Executive Branch – where the Ministry of Education has its hands tied.

Meanwhile, in the entities that govern education – which have immense autonomy enshrined by the Constitution –

corporate interests have taken over. The ANEP, which is responsible for mandatory education and teacher training, is ruled by mechanisms that together contribute to lowering the quality of teaching and lock the system into a self-referential and complacent bubble. On the one hand, teacher training still follows the model of the traditional school, without being informed by research. On the other hand, promotions are made on the basis of simple seniority without any evaluations of teacher development or competitiveness. The hiring of new teachers remains closed by the very people who run ANEP which expressly exclude teacher credentialing by universities. As if this were not enough, teachers are almost impossible to fire.

In secondary education – the true bottleneck of the educational system – more than a third of classes are missed due to teacher absences, and as many as 40% of students end up repeating grades. Primary education, where there is less teacher absenteeism, has high rates of grade repetition as well. In 2013, the struggle for higher salaries – which have grown steeply since the Leftist government took office in 2005, to the point that the starting salary for a teacher today is more than double that of a university professor – has left the poorest children without classes for more than a month in total. This does not include other strikes that opposed attempts at reform, proposed by successive governments in the post-dictatorship period, including those of the left. Private schools, which are less lenient about teacher absences even though they pay lower salaries than the public schools, have not suffered from this type of corporate onslaught. From this perspective, there is little “public” about Uruguayan education.

Aware of the Uruguayan attachment to the public as a sphere that mediates between society and state power and of the strong importance of public education in shaping the Uruguayan identity – and also of citizens’ distrust of market mechanisms,² teachers’ unions have contributed to what we can call a “refeudalization.” With cries of war, brandishing the banner of “public education,” they have claimed the right to sustain, without compromise, their corporate interests – expressed in privileges and perks that foster irresponsibility in the face of educational inequality and violate the right to education of the children who need it most. Claiming for themselves the right to make decisions about education without a single concession, the unions deny other citizens the right to critique, debate, and to make proposals. Thus, Uruguay may tout its public education, but it is not quite as public as it sounds. ■

¹ “Ceibal” (meaning a group of ceibos), is the acronym for “Conectividad Educativa de Informática Básica para el Aprendizaje en Línea” or “Educational Connectivity and Basic Information Technology for Online Learning.”

² As an illustration, it’s worth remembering how, in 1993, in the middle of a process of privatization that affected the whole world, the citizens of Uruguay voted with a 72% majority to repeal a law that enabled privatization of public companies.

> Uruguay's Miracle

Redistribution and the Growth of Unionism

by **Marcos Supervielle**, University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay and Board member of ISA Research Committee on Work (RC30), and **Mariela Quiñones**, University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay

“Improving equity would not have been possible without a very strong political will”

The second leftist government in Uruguay, elected in 2009, has deepened its pro-labor policies through Wage Councils and a tripartite system to fix the minimum wage for all occupational categories in all sectors of the economy. In doing so, it played a strategic role in promoting progressive income redistribution. In recent years real wages have grown by 4% per annum, and the minimum wage has increased by 250%. Previous to the arrival of the leftist government in 2004, the average salary represented 6.5 times the minimum wage, whereas today the average salary is only three times the minimum wage. Contrary to conventional wisdom that redistributive policies reduce levels of employment, the unemployment rates fell from 13.7% before the first leftist government came to power in 2004 to about 6.1% on average during its second term in office.

Moreover, the jobs available during this period increasingly offered decent work. Informal labor was re-

duced, increasing the numbers enrolled in social security and expanding the number of beneficiaries of all legal labor rights. Fulltime employment with benefits – or good quality employment – grew from 55% of all those employed in 2004 to 69% in 2011. In this period, youth employment also increased and labor unrest diminished. To be sure the latter still fluctuates in conjunction with cycles of labor relations – those of public workers linked to votes on public budgets and those of private workers linked to the term limits of collective bargaining agreements – but broadly, and over the long term, labor conflicts have decreased.

All this was possible due to a very favorable economic situation that ran counter to the crisis occurring in more developed countries. Such a bonanza was a necessary condition for improving social redistribution, but it would not be sufficient by itself. Improving equity in society would not have been possible without a very strong political will,

especially policies that had such dramatic consequences, reducing poverty from about 40% to 12% of the population and extreme poverty from 4.5% to 0.5%.

As we have noted, a social mechanism that has played a central role in this process was the so-called Wage Councils. These councils, which have had a long history in Uruguay, were reinvented by the first leftist government, and became entrenched as policy in its second term. The exponential growth in rates of unionization contributed to making the changes effective. Indeed, unionization has grown by approximately 300% since 2005, reaching a total of 350,000 members to date. By the end of 2013, the central union predicts that this number will reach 380,000, approximately 12% of the population of the country or 24% of the salaried labor force. There was an enormous growth not only in membership but also in the creation of new unions in sectors where none had existed before, such as in rural areas or in domestic work.

This explosive growth in union activity has had several consequences. On the one hand, it generated an outpouring of classic union ideologies. Traditionally, Uruguayan unions have remained separate from the state and corporations, but also from political parties – at least in the organic sense – including parties of the left. The influence of the latter operated through the leftist tendencies of leaders who could only arrive at such a position through democratic elections by the rank-and-file members. Another tradition of Uruguayan unionism is that each company or sector of production has its own particular union, turning unions into micro political systems concerned with local issues, which could be very divisive in the wider political sphere. As a result, the central Uruguayan union – the PIT-CNT – has always contained a broad range of union tendencies, albeit all of the left.

Through these democratic traditions, paradoxically, unionism lost some of its political coherence as new leaders, arising from below, did not necessarily align themselves with

the historic leftism. At the ideological level, in some sectors, radical union currents appeared and developed strong anti-government positions. In other sectors, corporate rhetoric prevailed, breaking with traditions that integrated union grievances into a broad political strategy to modernize the country and improve the positions of the lowest ranks of society. These new union tendencies, which in certain situations have proven extremely aggressive, have seemed to be altering the broad organization of unionism, generating challenges to the old patterns and creating new relationships with the future government. In practice, a new corporate grievance process has developed – and even become dominant in certain sectors – that is exclusively oriented towards increasing wages, without tying these grievances to any broader vision of the world, as had been the tradition among unions. Perhaps, we are also seeing a new left, operating within the traditional union structures, or, alternatively, creating new structures for a new vision of society based on the world of work. ■

> Uruguay's Agrarian Revolution

by **Diego E. Piñeiro**, University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay



From traditional cattle ranching... to multi-national pulp industry. Photos by Emilio Fernández.

In 2002 a deep economic and social crisis struck Uruguay after twenty years of neoliberal reforms, under the direction of the traditional parties. In 2005, the leftist Frente Amplio (Broad Front) won the election and began the arduous task of rebuilding the country. In subsequent years the economy grew at the highest rate on the continent, while redistributive policies managed to reduce poverty and destitution at unprecedented rates. Many of these achievements were due to the strong growth of the agricultural sector, which underwent a profound structural transformation in those years.

The structure of rural society in Uruguay had changed little in the course of the twentieth century. At its summit were the owners of relatively large livestock and agricultural establish-

ments engaged in the production of commodities for export. Due to the early formation of capitalist agriculture, wage workers provided much of the rural labor force, but, at the same time, there was also a sizable number of family producers (more *farmers* than peasants) of European origin who produced food for the internal market. At the beginning of the new century much of that social structure was revolutionized in an ongoing process that I will describe here.

Since the end of the last century there has been a growing demand in the world market for food, fiber, and raw materials for the production of biofuels. The inclusion of vast populations in emerging economies as new consumers has raised the prices of these products. As a producer of these goods in high demand, Uruguay

has experienced an increased intensity in land use. The country combined increased exploitation of new land for growing grains and oilseeds with an increase in the productivity of livestock, resulting in increased production and exports despite the loss of two million hectares. To these forms of production – which can be thought of as more traditional – we must add forestry. Thanks to government subsidies, which began in 1987, there are today more than a million forested hectares, processed by two pulp production plants constructed and operated by multinational corporations. Another ingredient affecting the relative balance of different forms of production, is the rise of biofuels, led by the state oil company.

Land prices provide a clear indicator of these changes in the agricultural

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agrarian world looks completely different from what it was in the last half of the twentieth century.

The dramatic change in landscape and agriculture resulted from several processes that fed on each other. First, changes in the regulatory framework facilitated the penetration of finance capital across a wide range of agricultural enterprises. Second, organizational changes within firms, particularly the construction of “network enterprises,” gave capital the resources to operate with extraordinary contractual flexibility. Third, there has been an increasing outsourcing of agricultural work to contractors who service agricultural machinery by drawing on their social networks to recruit and manage work crews. Fourth, technological changes, which come with precision agriculture, increase dependence of producers on genetically modified seeds with agrochemicals and new machinery. In the area of livestock, this includes the application of vaccines, new products to maintain animal health, feedlots, and so on.

At the same time, the arrival of new information and communication technologies (computers, Internet access, cellular phones, etc.) profoundly altered the management of agricultural companies. These technologies, combined with infrastructural improvements and the expansion of the use of light vehicles, altered the organization of the workforce, linking workers to one another and to the urban areas, shifting the cultural boundaries between “country” and “city.” This reconfiguration of the structure of agriculture and rural society is creating new actors and new alliances, demanding investigation especially in a country with a long tradition of agriculture and which aspires to improve its democracy, equity, and sustainability. ■

world. During the last decade, the average price of land has increased sevenfold. But for the largest farms (over 2,500 hectares) the increase has been twelve-fold, leading both small and large producers to sell their land. The result has been a growing concentration and foreign ownership of land. Preliminary data from the most recent Agricultural Census of 2011 show that if in the year 2000 there were 57,131 agricultural plots, eleven years later only 44,890 remained. Even though 91% of the 12,241 plots that disappeared had fewer than 100 surface hectares, there are indicators that point to the displacement not only of smallholders as in the decades of the 70s and 80s but also of the owners of local livestock.

The consolidation of a new tier of landowners has had an indisputable cultural impact not least associated

with the rise of foreign ownership. Preliminary data from the same Census of 2011 show that, whereas in 2000 90% of Uruguayan land was in the hands of individuals physically living in Uruguay, eleven years later that figure dropped to 54%. By 2011, 43% of Uruguayan land was in the hands of legal “persons,” mainly “Anonymous Societies,” most of whom were citizens and corporations of other nationalities.

Thus, we have gone from a landscape dominated by extensive livestock holding to one with vast expanses of grain and forest cultivation, production of biofuels, the domination of large corporations, the adoption of large machinery, the gradual exodus of a rural population to the cities and small towns, high land concentration, foreign ownership and so forth – to the point that today the

> The Rise of Hungary's Mafia Society

by **György Csepli**, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary



Appearing on the cover of the widely read *Heti Világgazdaság* (World Economy Weekly), the ruling party (Fidesz) is portrayed as a mafia.

process had really expected the transition to the new order. The common people certainly were not in favor of the change and they soon realized that the novelties of the system, in particular entrepreneurship and unemployment, were not to their taste.

Among the countries living in state socialism Hungary was known for tolerating a certain kind of entrepreneurship in agriculture. According to Ivan Szelenyi's book, *Socialist Entrepreneurs*, during state-socialist Hungary about 10% of the population were involved in activities that had an entrepreneurial appearance. Entrepreneurship, however, in the sense of Western capitalism, was not only not permitted but it was considered a crime. Szelenyi's theory of "interrupted embourgeoisement" proved to be wrong. The ex-socialist entrepreneurs quickly realized that under the new dispensation entrepreneurship was too risky and most of them failed. Success was contingent on networks rather than on talent or achievement. Many of the new post-socialist entre-

More than twenty years have passed in Hungary since the *annus mirabili* of 1989, when state socialism suddenly ceased to exist and gave way to a new system based on liberal principles. It was then that the transition to a market economy and democracy began. As Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery wrote in their introduction to *Un-*

certain Transition, observers of this process were divided in their interpretation, caught between the grand narratives of "the end of history" and the "new, unknown orbit of postmodernity." The reality turned out to be rather different.

Except for a few radical intellectuals and well-informed high-ranking Communist cadres, no agents of the

preneurs did not derive from former “socialist entrepreneurs” but from former high-ranking cadres.

Many of those who came from the working class or from middle and lower cadre positions have had to face the likelihood of unemployment. One and a half million former employees of the bankrupt state economy immediately lost their jobs as a consequence of the transition from a “shortage economy” to a “surplus economy.” The differences in income and consumption between the richest and the poorest families have become more marked, especially in recent years. Marginalized populations that include Roma, elderly people living in remote rural areas, and the homeless have lost all hope of catching up with society at large. Ethnic and territorial inequalities have overlapped, resulting in the emergence of ghetto-like settlements in Northern Hungary. Discrimination and a culture of poverty make the life of the Roma minority miserable.

In addition to material insecurity, there is a sense of epistemological insecurity that emerged with the opening of spaces for competing world-views and ideologies. Vaclav Havel’s famous greengrocer, living in socialism, demonstrated that “living a lie is living a lie.” No matter whether they were in power or were powerless, believers in socialism as well as the opposition were convinced that truth and falsity were clear, water-tight categories. With the transition from the party state to political pluralism, the frontier between truth and falsity disappeared – a division that before the transition had seemed so permanent. Unaccustomed to choosing between competing truths and lies people have be-

come disoriented. Freedom of thought has become a nightmare for those citizens who were afraid of thinking.

These two kinds of insecurity have led to a democratic revolt against liberalism. With the landslide victory for the Nationalist Coalition in 2010, democracy has devoured its children. On the 25th anniversary of the transition it could well happen that Hungary will return to state socialism, only this time it will appear in the guise of national socialism.

According to Bálint Magyar Hungarian society today can be characterized as a “mafia state,” partitioned into closed circles within which social ties are thick but between which ties barely exist. Or to put it in sociological terms, following Mark Granovetter, the prevalence of strong ties has given rise to the mafia state that, in turn, has inhibited the development of social organization based on weak ties. In consequence, the absence of civil society organizations based on weak ties has restricted national competitiveness and the growth of the economy.

In order to secure their legitimacy, leaders of the “mafia state” necessarily resort to a nationalist ideology. People outside the mafias that control the mechanisms of redistribution of goods and services get their share of redistribution in symbolic goods – the endlessly repeated message of nationalist ideology that Hungarians are born as freedom fighters, combatting internal and external enemies who are joined in a conspiracy. The internal enemy does not need to be defined as it has been stable and well known for a long time, namely the Jews. The external enemy, however,

has changed since there are no more Turks, Habsburgs or Soviets to target. The new external enemy is now sitting in Brussels. The European Union has become the focus of Hungary’s nationalist resentment. Paradoxically, or perhaps not so paradoxically, the anti-European Union rhetoric fakes ignorance of the funds pouring into the country from various EU sources.

The mafia state has produced three social clusters. One is the cluster within the closed circles of the ruling political families. The second consists of believers who are willing to consume the nationalist message of the government. They are ready to participate in the System of National Cooperation as it is called by the ruling party. There are several reasons for this enthusiasm: ardent anti-Communism, drives to recruit neophytes, experiences of injustice under the prior regime of state socialism or simply careerism. The third cluster of Hungarians consists of the new emigrants whose numbers have increased in the past few years. According to a study by Ágnes Hárs, it is the better educated, young people, residing in Western Transdanubia (adjoining Austria), and the old industrial heartland of Northern Hungary that provide the backbone of this emigration.

For those who remain in Hungary, however, there is no other exit from the present situation than to reestablish some sense of social trust, that is, the capacity to develop cooperation among members of society who are strangers to one another. The task must be to break out of the captivity of close ties and to create many new communities based on weak ties. ■

> The Fate of Class in Contemporary Hungary

by **Eszter Bartha**, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary



Abandoned industrial ruins – where once there were armies of workers, now there are snooping dogs. Photo by Balázs Gárdi.

The first question that comes to mind is whether the concept of class has any relevance in post-industrial society or indeed, what academic discussion would gain by bringing class back in. The career of the concept of “class” in Eastern Europe was closely linked to the development of state socialism, which proclaimed the working class to be the ruling class.

The eventual and rapid collapse of communist regimes across the region in 1989 discredited the legitimizing narratives of the official working-class histories. The events of that year disproved notions of a simple equivalence between class position and class consciousness found in the dominant trends of Marxist thought. While, in 1989, there were some East European intellectuals who still argued for a democratic socialism based on workers control¹, other groups, including many of the reformers, were calling for a “third way” between capitalism and socialism, and some for the creation of a social democracy based on a mixed economy and strong trade unions. It was also widely expected that the working class would not support the restoration of capitalism or even a reformist collectivist alternative. Of course, this expectation proved to be wrong, and there was little effective working-class resistance to the introduction of a capitalist economy. Indeed, there was not a single country in Eastern Europe where workers supported any kind of democratic socialist alternative to the existing system. Nor was the East European political and intellectual climate favorable for revisiting the concept of class after the change of regime: all forms of class theory were regarded as utterly discredited, and the working class

was often uncritically associated with the state socialist past, as intellectual elites invested in futures based on “embourgeoisement,” which downplayed the social and political roles of industrial workers.

Why is it, then, necessary to rethink the concept of class in Eastern Europe? The project of “embourgeoisement” promised the people a rapid catching-up with the standard of living of the middle classes in the advanced capitalist countries of the West *and* the maintenance of universal employment and social security that they enjoyed under socialism. Twenty years after the collapse of state socialism the failure of this project has become clearly visible for the masses. Privatization increased social mistrust since postsocialist capitalism everywhere created greater social and material inequalities than had existed under state socialism. The drastic contraction of heavy industry resulted in massive unemployment while foreign capital imposed unfair competition on domestic enterprises, which badly needed capital and infrastructural investments. Western authors also criticized neoliberal capitalism as a new “colonial” project for Eastern Europe.²

To the question of what kind of new structural positions postsocialist capitalism created in Hungary, we can answer that – in accordance with Western trends – it decreased the industrial sector while it significantly increased the share of the service sector of the economy. Moreover, outsourcing reinforced structural inequalities between East and West, which explains the relatively low proportion of capitalists and the high proportion of unskilled workers in Hungary in comparison with Western Europe. Szalai argues that a dual model is needed to describe contemporary Hungarian society in which she distinguishes between the workers of the multinational companies and the workers of the domestic sector. The latter are poorly paid, heavily exploited “*bricoleurs*,” often informally employed and living from one day to the next, while the former can be viewed as part of the new labor aristocracy. At the same time Szalai stresses the differentiated character of the Hungarian working class, the very shallow (or even non-existent) class consciousness and the weakness of the local trade unions, all of which impedes the development of a Hungarian working “class for itself” and, of course, the representation of the interests of labor.³

However, these new forms of inequality were not institutionalized (let alone sanctioned) by Hungarian society. “This market economy kicked us out” was the overwhelming feeling among my working-class interviewees.⁴ Workers were disappointed with “this capitalism.” Their skills and knowledge were downgraded by the new regime and they recognized that, although people were not equal under the Kádár regime, social-material inequalities have significant-

ly increased since 1989. Many of my respondents complained that their children can’t compete with the children of managers, doctors, and lawyers, who start their adult life with much better chances (due to private language courses, sports classes, dance school, ski camps, etc.).

This criticism of the new regime failed, however, to translate into a fully-fledged anti-capitalist critique. Typically, workers still expected the state to protect the domestic producers from the unfair competition of multinational companies and they saw the strong state and a kind of “third-road” national capitalism as a positive alternative. This reaction can be attributed to the lack of a strong anti-capitalist public sphere, to the discrediting of the term “working class” as well as deeper historical-economic reasons, which have conserved the backwardness of the region.

However, these Hungarian tendencies can also be observed in advanced Western countries such as the United States: political corruption, broadening of class divisions, expansion of the underclass, weakening of labor unions, etc. Could it be that postsocialist countries are holding up a mirror to the West, pointing to a global convergence of social and economic problems *alongside* the political consequences of the downgrading of class that reinforces ethnic-populist ideologies among the working people? It has become customary to argue that in postindustrial society with its corporate culture, talent, achievement and diligence decide who will climb the ladder so that “equal competition” creates *socially acceptable* occupational and material inequalities. This was also the ideology of postsocialist capitalism, which brought as much disillusionment as the earlier official Marxism-Leninism. Firstly, competition is not equal; secondly, the great social and material inequalities that ruthless capitalist competition generates are no longer accepted by the people. Indeed, many would even accept autocracy in exchange for greater social justice; here, hopefully, it is the democratic West that provides the mirror for the future of the East, and not the other way round. ■

¹ In Hungary the idea of democratic socialism without the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (the former Communist Party) was represented most completely by the Leftist Alternative Union (*Baloldali Alternatíva Egyesület*). After the political failure of its project, the intellectual heritage of this school was continued by the journal *Eszmélet* (Consciousness) launched in 1989. The internationally most well-known intellectual of this circle is Tamás Krausz.

² For a review of the literature see: Swain, N. (2011) “A Postsocialist Capitalism,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63:9, pp.1671-1695.

³ Szalai, E. (2004) “Tulajdonviszonyok, társadalomszerkezet és munkásság,” *Kritika*, 33:9, pp.2-6.

⁴ For a summary of this research see: Bartha, E. (2012) “‘Something went wrong with this capitalism’: Illusion and doubt in a Hungarian (post)industrial community,” in: Mathijs Pelkmans (ed.) *Ethnographies of Doubt*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp.191-225.

> On the (Ir)responsibility of Elites

by György Lengyel, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary



The Hungarian prime minister has a penchant for sports...

The Hungarian Prime Minister has a penchant for sports, particularly football. He often ends his speeches with “Forward, Hungary!” – a formula he borrowed from Berlusconi. Hungarian football is out of sorts nowadays. So is the political elite, appearing somewhat feeble. At the darling venue of the Prime Minister’s childhood, next to his provincial house, a stadium is being built with access via a planned narrow-gauge railway. Many dislike this. Others don’t. They say: “Let’s be proud of what we have accumulated.” In the vein of what the Deputy Prime Minister enunciated when still a politician in a rural town:

“If you have nothing, that’s what you are worth.”

This mentality could be found in the Hungary of the late state socialist period. From the seventies, after the decades of wartime privations, delivery obligations and forced collectivization, consolidation opened the road for individuals to feather their nests through a symbiosis of the quasi-market of the cooperative and the household plot, redistribution and the second economy. As a result, storied houses began to crop up in Hungarian villages. Many turned out to be hard to heat and inconvenient to live in, but they

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functioned well as prestige goods. The current ruling elite's prestige goods are the stadiums. They need not be owned – it suffices that they are associated with their names, like the pyramids, triumphal arches and cultural establishments of other countries.

However, the main trouble with the Hungarian political elite is not vainglory, greed, and tastelessness. I fear that the consolidation of the Hungarian democracy is at stake – this being the main responsibility of the Hungarian political elites. One need not be elitist to see that the elites have a fundamental role in designing social alternatives. And the political elite here and now is merely simulating adjustment to the democratic institutions while it behaves in a norm-breaching manner in weighty and significant matters.

Two such violations can be mentioned briefly. One is the denunciation of the elite settlement. The acceleration of the replacement of elites before the great changeover contributed to a process of political transformation that took place fairly quickly and without major social shocks. This, in turn, facilitated the agreement between the state-socialist elite and the elites of the rising democratic opposition. The roundtables of 1989 constituted a mechanism of elite settlement through which the elite structure appeared to develop a consensual project. There was a broad consensus around the adoption of the rules of parliamentary democracy with basic freedoms, the multiparty system and respect for private property. Actors mutually accepted each other's legitimacy and the rules of the game. That fractions of the political elite, following partisan interests, often re-wrote the operative rules of the consensually unified elite or denied their rival's legitimacy seemed to be disturbing but minor episodes that could be conveniently overlooked or swept aside.

The other grave norm-breaching example refers to donations collected during election campaigns that exorbitantly exceeded the legally permitted amounts. Party funding, specifically campaign funding, is an obscure, grey zone between legality and illegality which might determine the prospects of the Hungarian political elite. As Transparency International calculated, in the previous elections both leading parties – now ruling Fidesz and the opposition Socialists – spent at least triple the legally allowed amounts. Other specialists estimate this spending as far higher. Several initiatives have been made to modify the political financing act so as to make campaign financing more transparent, but none have been passed. This is not a specifically Hungarian phenomenon, but here and now the consolidation of democracy is at stake. Apparently, it is the interest of the ruling elite to keep up the muddled grey zone around party financing. The elite realizes but overlooks how much this situation is untenable. To be more precise, it sees it clearly but tends to interpret it in ideological terms.

A former Socialist Prime Minister, who has founded a new party since his premiership, hinted at the past absurdities in the funding of the two large antagonist parties, but said he was waiting for charges to be laid against him, before providing the concrete data in court. It is not quite clear what keeps him from telling the truth beforehand. The present Prime Minister mentioned that a ruthless segment of big business had wriggled itself into politics, first of all into the party of his adversary, the Socialists. A member of the former democratic opposition and ex-minister argues that the present governing elite has built up a mafia state, for the government can manipulate the economy and redistribute the revenues to its clientele with the help of laws and regulations.

There is no anarchy or dictatorship in Hungary. However, both may emerge, the latter standing a greater chance. With its two-thirds parliamentary majority (actually a minority in terms of eligible voters), the conservative government has put through a new constitution, new law of the media, a new act concerning elections and a new labor code and accomplished all this without first achieving broad support. These have cut back earlier rights and entitlements to a considerable degree, restricted the judicial review and threatened democratic checks and balances. The influence of the EU appears to be very limited and the voice of critical intellectuals is also faint. The Prime Minister's managing style is authoritarian and toxic; people are afraid of the uncertainties caused by the protracted crisis so they call for social care and greater equality.

This encourages populist rhetoric that presents itself as the fight for "economic freedom," displays an arrogance towards international political partners and becomes the excuse to levy special taxes such as those imposed on the banks and other economic branches mostly of foreign ownership. It is also possible that this is not mere rhetoric but the governing elite does indeed think that they have to fight against external political and economic constraints to avoid the "country becoming a colony," and that they have to considerably cut back the country's external debts amounting to 80% of the GDP because "someone in debt is no longer free." Sociologists, however, well know the social technique which tries to strengthen unity by creating phantom and alien enemies. As a by-product, a xenophobic and racist party got into the Hungarian parliament as a result of the last elections.

Over two thirds of the Hungarian adult population speak no foreign language. The state media present

foreign criticism of the government as offenses against the entire Hungarian nation. The great majority of the independent media is tabloid which tends to interpret the world as the struggle between heroes and wicked people. Nowadays the Hungarian political elites deserve this antagonistic description as they are extremely disunited. It is however mistaken to think that the consensual model envisioned in 1989 has simply been replaced by a competitive majoritarian model.

The Prime Minister does not conceal his intention to overcome this disunity by creating a “central field of forces,” or, in other words, by cementing his ruling position for several elections to come. That – he claims – is indispensable for the elite to fulfill its cultural obligation, that is, to put forth examples of how to live “nicely, nobly, and tastefully.” This latter is a literal allusion to a former political theorist, István Bibó, who emphasized the social responsibility of the elite. So far the examples of elite behavior do not offer promising prospects for the future.

What critics find is a mediocre selfishness and manipulative machinations wherein the governing elite is involved in the leasing of state land and the distribution of tobacco shop concessions to clientele. Bibó’s one-time polemicist, the youthful György Lukács passionately denounced the claim of a Dostoevsky hero that lying leads to truth, yet a little later he found it to be an acceptable solution. So far this recipe appears to have failed.

In the spring of 2014, elections will be held in Hungary. There is no doubt that they will be free elections. There is, however, some doubt about the elections being *fair*, and whether they will be controlled by the norm of *restrained partisanship*, meaning that the governing elite will refrain from abusing their excessive power to manipulate the media and the voters.

The Prime Minister likes to cite people other than political thinkers. In one of his annual addresses he cited the *bon mot* of an ice hockey player who said the secret of good

playing is to “skate where the puck is going to be, and not where it has been.” It is an appropriate metaphor since the Prime Minister realized that the job of a statesman is to explore the real needs of the masses and to weigh the requirements and possibilities of the future, not only of the present. It seems however that the Prime Minister has not chosen the right playing style for this manly game: while he pretends to see the goal and the only right way toward it, he cuts up the ice rink so much and re-writes the rules so thoroughly, there is a chance that when the teams re-enter the rink, it won’t be the same game anymore.

It’s cold comfort to know that as long as there are free elections, there is still a chance for the convergence of the elites, for the opposing parties to abandon their positions so as to arrive at consensus – the precondition for a consolidated democracy. It is cold comfort because this process might take many years and it is not yet obvious what would usher the elites towards this goal. ■

> South Africa

Women Miners and the Underground Self

by **Asanda Benya**, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa



| Asanda and a rock drill operator taking a break from barring.

In South Africa's large and highly mechanized mining industry there are over 48,000 women working in underground occupations, mainly in platinum and gold mines. These women form part of the core workforce and labor as miners or general workers, installing support structures, water and ventilation pipes or operating different machines used underground.

For three months in 2008 I set out to study a platinum mine in South Africa as an ethnographer, working and living with women underground workers. My main aim was

to understand the challenges women face underground. This was followed by a longer period from 2011 to 2012 when I immersed myself in the underground world working as a winch driver, cleaning blasted rock and hoisting it to surface, lashing and preparing the face for drilling.

As my shifts started as early as 4am, I had to leave the mine hostel at 3am and make my way to the shaft. Women who live further from the mines habitually leave their homes as early as 2am. These women have to navigate their way through public transport, often taking a bus from



| Asanda operating a winch.

their village to town, then a taxi from town to the mine hostels where they catch a company bus to their respective shafts. It's a long, dangerous, and expensive journey which can take close to one third of a worker's wage – \$120-150 dollars a month.

The struggle does not end when we arrive in the shaft, but intensifies when catching the cage from surface to the stopes, which are located 2-3 kilometers underground. Catching the elevator-size cage was always a rude awakening, an aggressive event; mired in shoving and ending with 50 or more workers tightly squeezed around you. In this space, to breathe comfortably, while your legs are dangling in the air, one has to synchronize their breathing with that of the person closest to you. Inside the cage, lamps are switched off, it is an unwritten rule. In that darkness, some workers would take advantage of the proximity and fondle your breasts knowing that you cannot move or switch on your lamp to expose and identify them.

When you get underground, it is a different world: dark, dusty, hot, and humid, with protruding rocks and water puddles. The stopes are short, sometimes as short as 1.2 meters and to move from one end to the other you crawl and negotiate the rocks that occasionally were dangerously unstable. Sometimes we would spend eight hours

in these stopes, working on our knees installing supports to prevent rocks from falling while drilling. It was in these stopes that I was reminded of the immediacy of death.

My work underground ranged from operating a winch, pumping out water and removing ore, transporting material to the rock drill operators or assisting some of my crew members. Operating the winch was a delicate and fatal affair which involved controlling the winch ropes that, with one tactless hand movement, could easily become unsynchronized and coil-up. Mastering the art of operating the winch depended more on tacit knowledge than on formal training.

While all the workers had specific occupations and responsibilities, as women we were also seen as assistants to the "real" workers, men. It was all common to see an RDO (rock drill operator) calling you with his lamp to hold steady his drilling stick and another male worker calling you to "help" pump-up roof bolts used to support the hanging wall. None of this was considered work, simply "help," it was only seen as work if done by real workers, men. As women we were sometimes delegated cleaning responsibilities or fetching water for male crew members. Towards the end of each shift, after drilling, we charged up drilled holes with explosives and connected blasting cables.

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I quickly learnt that to survive as a woman I had to have a thick skin. But in addition to the thick skin I had to learn a way of “being” underground. Alongside the formal rules that I was taught on surface and at the training center, there were informal rules, a different logic and order operating underground that was defined by men. Operating outside that logic would indicate that you were an illegitimate worker. To be accepted and seen as a real mineworker, I had to learn how to walk, talk, work, carry material, use my lamp like a mineworker. From working with crews I discovered the many “languages” used to communicate underground. Besides *fanakalo*, the underground pidgin language, I had to learn other “languages” that were used when the noise from drilling engulfed our stopes, the lamp and glove language.

The violence in the cage and dangerous conditions in the stopes all seemed to require coping strategies that, at first, I could not muster. At noticing this, workers told me that to survive underground, you have to “forget yourself” and others said “if you bring yourself underground you can cause accidents.” How could I not bring myself underground, I used to wonder? Soon, I learned that forgetting the self means adopting a different identity, or at least negotiating your identity and acting differently. Workers call it your “underground self” – a self that takes risks, resists thinking about the possibilities of rock falls or family, a self that sees cage violence, sexual harassment, and seismic events as part of the culture. Part of this culture also makes one think that 120 deaths annually in the industry are “not that bad,” until it happens to someone you know

Glossary of Mining Terms

Cage: an enclosed platform used to transport workers and material underground – similar to an elevator.

Lashing/shovelling: the process of clearing blasted rock, forcefully, often using a shovel.

Stope: An opening or room made in the process of excavating and extracting ore.

Winch: A machine consisting of a rotating drum and a rope, used to scrape and pull out ore from drilled areas.

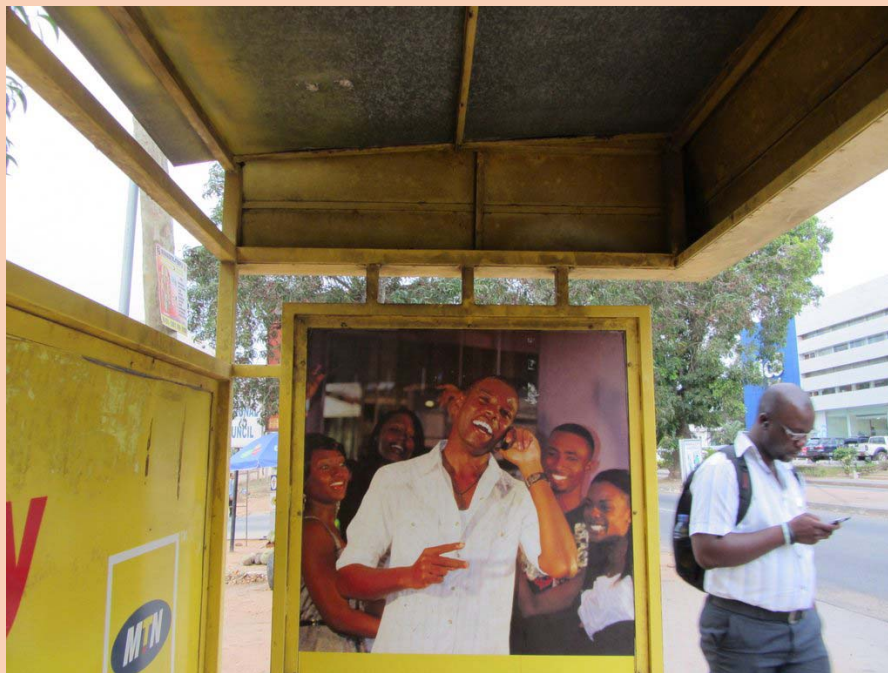
or someone you’ve worked with. Even then, you can only be disturbed for two days, the day you see the emergency workers going to get the body and the following day, the day of mourning. After that, you are supposed to get back to your underground self and continue pushing production and navigating the unstable rocks.

Back on surface I often wondered about the contradictions of underground work – the possibilities of death as liberating and dignifying – and of my two selves, the underground self that took risks barring loose rocks and my cautious surface self. While I did this for research, many do it to feed their children, put a roof over their heads and take them to school. I thus concluded that maybe the reward of being able to take your children to school is the liberating and dignifying part about putting your life at risk. ■

> Côte d'Ivoire

The Symbolic Capital of the Mobile Phone

by **Jordanna Matlon**, Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse, France



The mobile phone as the ultimate status symbol.

A pitiable sight in Adjamé's *black*¹ is the section for used and stolen mobile phones. Hundreds of men line up single-file on either side of a major thoroughfare. Each man has one or several phones on his person which he flashes at passers-by, desperate to stand out from the mass. They whisper, hiss, or call out; some make silent appeals with their face or hands, others follow for a couple of paces, bargaining down from their starting price before being asked. These hawkers range in age and dress from barely teenagers in grubby tees and frightened faces, smooth, self-aware twenty- and thirty-some-things, and tired-looking men past their prime in respectable, casual Friday-type shirts and slacks. They offer dinosaur relics and *bona fide*

smartphones equipped with technology that only a fraction of Abidjan's population will ever use. If supply indicates anything about demand, the market for mobile phones in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire is ringing off the hook.

In researching the livelihoods and lifestyles of underemployed Abidjanais men from 2008 to 2009, I found a particularly rich resource in the city's mobile phone culture. Across the city billboards for the largest phone companies imitated music video stills, featuring hip men accessorized by doting divas – and a phone. These suggestive images are effective: country-wide there are over 17 million mobile telephone subscribers in a population of 22.4 million, whereas 42% of Ivoirians live below the poverty line. Widely avail-

able at a full range of prices, mobile phones are generally accessible among deeply peripheral populations who use them more symbolically than as functional devices. Even cheap phones can offer a veneer of *bling* despite limited functional capabilities, a fact not lost on marketers who embellish basic models with bright colors or metallic faceplates. The cheapest second-hand phone can go for as little as 5,000 FCFA.²

When I met Calice, a hard-up twenty-three-year-old juice vendor, the headphones in his ears resembled an iPhone advertisement. It was only a look: his phone had been out of batteries for some time and he could not afford new ones. The accessory, however, cost him 27,000 FCFA upfront and he was paying the rest of its

40,000 FCFA cost in installments.³ Especially among men, phones are a must-have accessory. In *maquis* [open-air bars], they are prominently displayed on tables, silently or playing music, while their owners drink. As status markers they are a relatively democratic means of gaining visibility and accessing the world of modern communicative technology, and have come to play a significant role in Abidjanais sociality.

Phones counter the anonymity of peripheral life. A name and phone number, and sometimes only a phone number, make for common graffiti around Abidjan. Numbers are scrawled on street-side stalls, in the backs of taxis and on *maquis* tables, perhaps with the distant hope that someone, somewhere, is looking for a good time. A friend employed in one of Abidjan's foreign embassies returned from his last day of work with his shirt marked up not with goodbye wishes, but phone numbers. Phone numbers are one of few forms of documentation for populations who live lives under a guise of informality: unregistered, undocumented, unseen. They signal participation in modernity as well as in local and distant social networks, and your "contacts" list indicates status. During one conversation, a local musician named Doug MC pulled out a magazine featuring an Ivorian artist who performs in New York City. He showed me the man's US number on his phone, and boasted that his friend often called him. Moreover, re-

ceiving a call is proof that someone cares enough to spend the money to call you. When it happens in public everyone around bears witness to this fact: at weddings, in classrooms, amidst somber meetings and at official functions phones go off, always with ringers set on high volume.

If the Western stereotype is that a man needs a ride to snag a woman, in Abidjan he needs a phone (and if and when he has her, he should probably buy her one too, credit included). As one of my friends remarked, this is both a blessing and a curse: a man buys his girlfriend a phone not just to impress but to keep tabs on her, and it comes with the expectation that she will answer his call at all times. Phones define the realm of the possible for poor men's consumption capabilities, and even among the most peripheral populations most men had at least one; only the most desperate cases were without. To have a phone was to have respect. When I asked Erick if he ever wanted to upgrade his 5,000 FCFA mobile phone, he replied, "Of course I want to change. I am a human being, every person is ambitious." And Samuel explained that as a man he has "biological, sentimental, and social needs" that he "must fulfill." He went on, "Everyone enjoys a little pleasure. I, for example, have a Sony Ericsson mobile phone." And the more phones the better: there is nothing bizarre about carrying around two or three phones, the justification being that each phone corresponds

to a different network, so you can call friends within various networks at the cheapest rate.

However good they may be as decoration, entertainment, or to receive calls, peripheral Abidjanais seldom used their phones to make calls. Only the caller pays, and they rarely had credit. Calls I received tended to be from *cabines* – a ubiquitous stand comprised of a small wooden bench and table, typically manned by a young man or woman with a mobile and bulk credit from all the networks. Credit is available for up to 100,000 FCFA, and the more you purchase at once, the more *bonus*, or free credit you earn. Alternatively, the person calling immediately hung up (expecting me to call back). Or I would be "beeped" – sent a free automatic text message requesting I call the number back. And if expecting a call, a friend or partner can send credit to the caller via a *cabine*. But unlike *tag, you're it*, who calls whom indicates the hierarchy between the caller and the called. Those with more money call those who have less in the same manner that African "big men" maintain status vis-à-vis patronage relations. Financial and in-kind support ensures not only dominance, but a social debt. ■

¹ Known as the *black* (the English word was used here), this part of Adjamé – Abidjan's largest market – was known to be shady, often peddling in stolen goods.

² At the time of my research 1 USD was approximately 500 FCFA.

³ Men often justified exorbitant phone purchases by stating that this was a way to keep their savings, and if they needed to cash in they could trade the phone for a cheaper model. None of these men had bank accounts.

> Report from the European Sociological Association Conference, Torino 2013

by **Jennifer Platt**, University of Sussex, UK and ISA Vice-President for Publications, 2010-2014



The ISA Executive Committee and Local Organizing Committee enjoying Turin.

The ISA's Publications Committee has a policy of sending members to key conferences to report back on what is going on to inform our editors; this is one of those reports. But how to report on a whole meeting? There were said to be at least 2,600 people attending; 4,000 abstracts had been submitted, of which 3,200 were accepted. It is clearly impossible for any one person to attend everything when there are many simultaneous activities. My strategy was to go to as many different things as possible, on diverse topics, without regard to my personal interests, or with regard to them but looking for

novel or alien approaches. I am not sure whether this strategy was the reason why there seemed to be more people than I was accustomed to meeting at conferences who worked in policy rather than academic settings. Whatever the reason, I thought this gave an interesting perspective on some issues, as well as access to data not open to every researcher. It also meant that academic sociologists were getting more opportunities than usual to pass on their research to the policy world.

Timetable slots were an hour and a half, and the non-plenary ones normally had three or four papers,

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which meant that each had to be very briefly presented; the effect being to encourage data without theory or theory without data. The maximum number of participants had the opportunity to give a paper, but that was not an unequivocal advantage for the listener! It was hard to judge what more extended versions of the papers, suitable for publication, would be like. However, the skeletal structure did make it very clear what were some of the key points. Here is a sample¹:

- Secularism does not have to be regarded as a foundational part of modernity.
- The former communist countries can usefully be categorized as post-colonial.
- Cultural stratification might be more fully understood if business entertainment practices were studied.
- Crisis may lead to new creative opportunities, giving more visibility to young people's subjective choices.
- Government reactions to financial crisis have implications for professionals in the health care system which need to be taken into account in the sociology of professions.
- Performative and arts-based biographical methods, excellent of their kind, may not be accessible to the general public. A grounded theory approach in a large study of European identities led to the discovery of eight different types of felt European identity.
- Elderly people found weak ties, with others on the periphery of their social circles, important for support because they involved lesser obligations than ties with those closer, such as relatives.
- A lot of people [especially in Germany and Switzerland] are now working on aspects of fashion.
- Family sociology has neglected people living in single-person households.
- The level of success of radical right parties depends on such factors as voting systems [compulsory voting, and broadcasting opportunities, bring in people hostile to politics], and whether there is a moderate right party available as an alternative.
- Contemporary right parties have shifted their attention to ethno-culture rather than "race;" there are different scapegoats or objects of negative identification in different parts of Europe – Islam in the West, the communist past for the East.
- A number of presentations which relied on secondary survey data, offering description without explanation, suggested that it would be useful to have some deliberate methodological comparisons with "qualitative" approaches using smaller and less formally representative samples.

ESA is just starting a new journal; they already have *European Societies*, and both journals will be electronically free to members. The new one is the *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, also to be published by Routledge; the first issue is planned for March 2014. The editors are Paul du Gay, Ricca Edmondson, Eeva Luhtakallio, and Charles Turner. An editorial board of nineteen includes seven members based outside Europe and so far, surprisingly, none from Eastern Europe. ■

¹ Much programme information on the conference is still available at the ESA website, <http://www.europeansociology.org/conferences/11th-esa-conference.html>

> Final Declaration

Adopted by the General Assembly of the XXIXth Congress of the Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS)



"Crisis and Social Emergencies in Latin America" – theme of the 29th Congress of ALAS in Santiago.

Meeting in Santiago, the capital city of Chile, from September 29 to October 4 (2013), 4,168 sociologists from 30 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and elsewhere participated in 33 working groups, 79 panels, 86 book launches, and 5 plenary conferences. Twelve preparatory (pre-ALAS) events helped enormously to disseminate the objectives of the Congress, encouraging active participation in our Association. In particular, the inclusion of hundreds of students and young professionals and the formation of networks to exchange information and experiences will mark the legacy of this Congress of the Latin American Sociological Association.

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the coup in Chile, and not one participant in the Congress escaped the intense debate and critical reflec-

tions it provoked, both in the Congress and in the country, about the effects of such a barbaric event, as well as the long silencing of the trauma, which conservative intellectuals, governments, and international organizations saw as the capitalist re-founding of Chile and of Latin America as a whole.

Today, the rigor of our studies combines in creative ways with an expansion of critical capacity, but also with continent-wide social and political movements of great vitality and transformative power. In recent years, several such movements stand out:

- The struggle of Latin American migrants for true reforms in the United States that would recognize rights to work, health, education, and social security, and of course, the possibility of Latin American communities and families to live in that country without persecution.

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- The struggle of Mexico's democratic teachers unions who demand true education reform and an end to the planned firings of teachers who belong to the largest union on the continent (1,200,000 teachers).
- The continent-wide struggle against the illegal appropriation and savage exploitation of the natural and strategic resources of our region, such as oil, gas, mining, agriculture, fishing, forests, coasts, and water.
- The profusion of demands in Colombia for true peace negotiations that would put an end to the most prolonged and painful conflict on the continent.
- The persistent and brave struggle of the Cuban people for respect of their sovereignty and an end to the blockade.
- The struggle for recognition of and an end to the aggressions against the democratically elected governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Ecuador.
- The struggle for real and deep democratic transformation in all the countries of the region.
- The struggle against neoliberal cuts in health, education, social security, and pensions.

- The struggles against violence, terror, and the growing presence of security apparatuses in the lives of our communities and peoples.
- The struggle against corruption and extravagance of extremely rich governments, officials, and functionaries as their people grow ever poorer.
- The struggles against the constraints on social programs and public policies.
- The struggle against US spying on all of our countries.
- The struggle to recover the true sovereignty of our nations and the autonomy of indigenous, Afro-descendent and island peoples.

Such an accounting requires systematic work from sociologists of the continent. We have a responsibility to share our knowledge and disseminate our findings concerning the most pressing social problems: the threat of land destruction; poverty; exclusion; insecurity; violence; and the vulnerability of the majority of the population to disasters and economic crises. We must seek to achieve full freedom of expression, association, and criticism for all those who inhabit our region; the institutionalization of policies that will improve the welfare of the population, implemented by

socially responsible states in compliance with the rights of all individuals and peoples; overcoming of all forms of coloniality of knowledge and power, with true academic autonomy and inclusion, without evaluation parameters imposed by international organizations, and with free access to the production and exchange of knowledge. These objectives form the basis of our commitment and the promises for the future of our Association.

Our universities and institutions of higher education, public and private, must make an extraordinary effort to constantly renew their research, in order to give our societies and states the foundation on which to establish solid commitments to benefit those most in need and to defend justice, freedom, and diversity.

ALAS embodies these aspirations and assumes responsibility for continuing in the path it has followed to date, while making every effort to include a greater number of sociologists – respecting and recognizing the plurality of their theoretical perspectives, practical experiences, and identities – in pursuit of a world wherein we all may fit. ■

Long live ALAS!
Long live our America!

> Social Transformations and the Digital Age

by **Elisa P. Reis**, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, former member of the ISA Executive Committee, 2006-2010, and ISA Representative to ISSC¹



| Elisa Reis, new Vice-President of ISSC.



| Alberto Martinelli, the new President of ISSC.

“**S**ocial Transformations and the Digital Age” was the theme of the World Social Science Forum organized by the International Social Science Council (ISSC) in Montreal from October 13 to 15 (2013). Over 1,000 social scientists, science managers, and experts on digital matters, coming from 60 countries, took part in the Forum that included around 750 presentations, plus various side events organized by ISSC partners.

The plenary sessions, focusing on crucial issues for contemporary society, attracted large audiences and provided opportunities for lively dialogues across the social science disciplines. The ISSC invited an active group of young fellows who not only presented their own works, but posed challenging questions for dis-

cussion and encouraged us all to undertake collaborative research.

The ISA sponsored a session on the major themes in current Canadian sociology with a view to assessing the gains, promises, shortcomings, and the implications of the digital age for knowledge generation and policy intervention. Under the title “Understanding Social Transformations in a Digital Age, Canada 2013 – Canadian Sociology in the Run-up to the ISA World Congress 2018,” four paper presentations provided a good sample of contemporary Canadian sociology. Patrizia Albanese, President-Elect of the Canadian Sociological Association and chair of the local organizing committee for the XIX ISA World Congress to be held in 2018 in Toronto, and her colleagues Howard Ramos, Rima Wilkes

and Cheryl Teelucksingh, offered an exciting preview of the next Congress after Yokohama.

ISA also participated in the session on “The Changing Geopolitical Landscape in the 21st Century: Human Rights and Ethics.” Organized by Saths Cooper, President of the International Psychological Association, this panel anticipated the next ISSC World Social Science Forum which has the theme “Transforming Global Relations for a Just World.” The third World Social Science Forum will take place in September 2015 in Durban, South Africa where we hope for a strong participation from the ISA, especially its younger members. ■

¹ Note from the editor: Congratulations to Elisa Reis who was elected Vice-President of ISSC and to Alberto Martinelli (former President of the ISA, 2000-2004) who was elected President of the ISSC at the Montreal Meeting.

> *Global Dialogue's* Russian Team

by **Elena Zdravomyslova**, European University at St. Petersburg and member of the ISA Executive Committee, 2010-14

Our team is a flexible one. The core group of translators are Elena Nikiforova, Anna Kadnikova, and Asja Voronkova. Others contribute to the project more or less regularly and we expect new team members as well as a certain rotation. We belong to different sociological institutions. Currently the results of the project are disseminated by the St Petersburg Sociological Association which is the regional branch of the Russian Sociological Society. We are happy to be a part of the transnational teams of translators. Working on the Russian version of the magazine makes us alert about the current debates in the global sociological community and helps us broaden our sociological horizon. We learn more as we try to find Russian linguistic equivalents for terms and categories. We are, indeed, "learning by doing" sociological translations! We wish *Global Dialogue* to continue and cover the diversity of sociological concerns and perspectives! We wish this magazine to be globally famous! ■



Elena Zdravomyslova, PhD in sociology, Professor at the European University, St Petersburg (EUSP), co-director of the Gender Program at EUSP; project coordinator at the Centre for Independent Social Research. Her research and teaching fields include: gender studies, women's movements, and qualitative research methods. Areas of expertise include gender relations in Russia, feminist theory, sociology of care, and biographical research.



Anna Kadnikova has an MA in sociology. She graduated from the European University at St Petersburg and her academic interests are pro-life mobilization in Russia during the last decade.

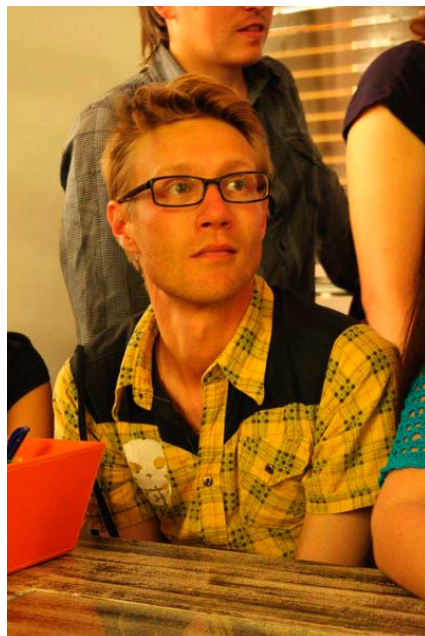


Elena Nikiforova is a research fellow at the Center for Independent Social Research, St Petersburg. She received her diploma from the Department of Sociology at St Petersburg State University, studied at the School for International Studies, St Petersburg State University, and at the Department of International Studies, University of Limerick, Ireland (MA). Her current academic interests lie in the sphere of mobility and space and are largely influenced by the debate on globalization and transnationalism, and the study of "borders." To date, her research has focused on the transformations of places, identities and life trajectories connected to the ongoing reconfiguring of political space in the former Soviet empire; her regions of interests include (but are not confined to) the Baltic States (predominantly Estonia and Latvia), Northwest Russia and the Russian Far North.

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Asja Voronkova is a musician, the founder of the rock group *Patience Airways*. She received her BA at Smolny College (St Petersburg State University, Russia) and Bard College (USA). She has published on the sociology of rock music; her particular sociological interest is extreme metal music as a youth culture phenomenon. She works as a translator in the sociological journal *Laboratorium*.



Alexander Kondakov, MA, is a research fellow at the Center for Independent Social Research, St Petersburg. He graduated from the International Institute for the Sociology of Law and his academic interests are sociology of law and queer studies. His current project is focused on the controversies of sexual citizenship in Russia.



Yuliya Martinavichene is a Faculty Member at the Department of Media of the European Humanities University (Vilnius, Lithuania) and a doctoral candidate at the Department of Philosophy. Her main research interests include visual semiotics, public service advertising, and the philosophy and sociology of collective identities. Her master's thesis was a study of the advertising of Belarusian outdoor public service and its discursive appeal.



Ekaterina Moskaleva is a sociology graduate of the St Petersburg State University. Her research interests lay in the sphere of public relations and art through her involvement in two big projects, the International Franchise Festival, Geek Picnic where she performed as a project manager, and the Critical Mass 2013 (as a researcher and event manager). At present, she works as a project manager at the St Petersburg Branch of the High School of Economics, Russia.